



Cliff Management Project

Introduction

The cliff and rock outcrop areas of Shenandoah National Park are some of the largest in the region and contain myriad significant vegetation communities and rare plant and animal populations (Ludwig et al., 1993). Intense use of these areas by hiking, climbing and camping enthusiasts has led to severe degradation of vegetation and soils at some cliff sites, including impacts to rare species and communities (Hilke, 2002).



Rock climbing at Little Stony Man cliffs.

Management Needs

The Park must protect cliff resources while still providing opportunities for visitor enjoyment of those resources (Shenandoah National Park, 2003). Important information about factors such as location, resource composition and visitor use impacts necessary to make decisions about cliff management is seriously lacking. The Cliff Management Project, taking place from 2005- 2007, will fund resource and recreation use assessments that will culminate in the development and implementation of a cliff management plan to mitigate current impacts and direct the future management of fragile cliff areas.

Current Procedures

The Cliff Management Project is a comprehensive 3- year effort from 2005 – 2007 to address the challenges facing cliff areas in the Park. Funding is being provided by the Natural Resource Preservation Program (NRPP). The project will fund surveys to assess biological and geological resources, visitor impact, and visitor use, that will culminate in the development and implementation of a Cliff Management Plan. This plan will direct mitigation, monitoring, and restoration efforts, and direct management of visitor use and associated impacts at cliff sites.

Year one (2005) of the project is devoted to gathering

information on the location, composition, and recreation uses of cliff resources through the implementation of four cooperator contracts. Year two (2006) focuses on the completion of cooperator projects, outreach efforts, and synthesis of information into a Cliff Management Plan. Year three (2007) includes finalization of the Cliff Management Plan and the completion of the NEPA and public review process, coupled with continued outreach and plan implementation activities.

References

- Hilke, J.C. 2002. Management considerations for rock outcrop barren communities on three peaks in Shenandoah National Park. Master's Degree Research Project. University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont.
- Ludwig, J.C., G.P. Fleming, C.A. Pague, T.J. Rawinski 1993. A Natural Heritage Inventory of Mid- Atlantic Region National Parks in Virginia: Shenandoah National Park. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Technical Report #93- 5.
- Shenandoah National Park 2003. Strategic Management Plan - Shenandoah National Park. Internal NPS Document.



Outcrop cliff with vegetation growing up the edge of the cliff.